

17 100 57 CAR

JUL 1968

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00001089687

GAPS IN THE PUBLISHED RECORDS OF UNITED STATES HISTORY¹

IN the spring of 1902 the Queen of the Netherlands issued a mandate to some ten of the foremost historical scholars of her kingdom, constituting them a Commission of Advice for National Historical Publications. Meeting from time to time, and proceeding with proper Dutch deliberation, the commission elaborated a valuable and suggestive report, which was presented nearly two years later.² In this they take up in a methodical manner the general aspects and the various subdivisions of the national history, and discuss carefully under each head the state of the original materials requisite for thorough knowledge and the question what portions of that material have been made accessible in print and what portions still remain that ought to be published. The whole proceeding was eminently Dutch, characteristic of a cautious and prudent nation, that can afford the time to do things on a right plan. Great as is the mass of published material for the history of the Netherlands, the government itself had in the last seventy years done much less of this work than several of the other European governments. There was a general feeling that more should be done. But those who had the matter most at heart had no mind that the government should proceed haphazard, printing this or that body of documentary material because it had been often talked of, or because some enthusiast, having for the first time made its acquaintance, had conceived an exaggerated notion of its importance and had persuaded some facile official to let him print it at government expense after some mode of editing dictated by his own fancy. On the contrary, the most expert intelligence available by the nation was first to consider with deliberate care the question what most needed to be done, and was then to devise a general and relatively permanent plan for doing it. The immediate result was a highly interesting survey, exhibiting clearly the relative documentation of the different parts or phases of Dutch history. The future result will be a well-ordered system of volumes and series, by which gaps will be filled and existing collections supplemented, so that in the

¹ A paper read before the Columbian Historical Society of Washington, D. C.

² *Commissie van Advies voor 's Rijks Geschiedkundige Publication, Overzicht van de door Brunnepublicatie aan te vullen Leemten der Nederlandsche Geschiedkennis* (Hague, Nijhoff, 1904, pp. ix, 108).

end the original sources for the national history may be evenly presented.

In reading such a survey, it was impossible not to be struck with the thought, how largely the method followed was applicable to the United States. For our briefer history, though the national government has done relatively little, much documentary material has already been published. But much yet remains to be done, and we are proceeding to do it without system or order. Executive departments of the federal government, or clerks of Congressional committees, conceive and execute documentary compilations; but all is casual and miscellaneous. More than half the state governments are publishing or have published historical materials; and no two have followed the same plan. Historical societies are prone to publish what seems at the moment most interesting or most available, provided of course it is of date anterior to 1783, at which date for most of them American history comes to an end; certainly they seldom pay any regard to what other historical societies are doing. Many zealous individuals have added and are adding to the mass of valuable documentary print; but still in a casual manner. The result is chaos. Some parts of our history are relatively oversupplied with original material, while others are in this regard neglected, and therefore remain unwritten, or are left a prey to those writers who do not need documentary material in order to compose historical volumes. Figuratively speaking, we have bought enormous quantities of supplies for our excavations, we have engaged our workers, we have dug deeply here and there; but we have "made the dirt fly" before we have mapped our isthmus. Or, to vary the metaphor but still keep near to the earth, one great region of our national domain, the historical region, is still, so far as primary labors are concerned, largely an unsurveyed tract, subject to squatter settlement and squatter sovereignty. Would it not be more rational to take a lesson from the methodical procedure of the Dutch?

It would be both futile and presumptuous for an individual student to attempt, in any length of time, to make for his country so well-rounded a survey as that which has resulted from the joint labors of the Dutch commission. Yet it has seemed possible that, without attempting a detailed survey of the field, one might by a hasty sketch contribute to the evening's entertainment of a historical society, and perhaps suggest some thoughts that others might at a later time elaborate and even execute. It should be fully understood that in this sketch there is no thought of general histories or of monographs, of the question whether on this or that subject a historical

work has or has not been written. The sole thought is of that prior and more fundamental question, what materials exist and are available for the treatment of the subject, assuming that some one should wish to write upon it, or that, if already dealt with, it has not been treated in the light of all the evidence procurable. Suppose that nothing had yet been written on American history; in what state are the materials for attacking it? In order to have any practical utility, such an inquiry, it should also be observed, presupposes that we confine ourselves to materials which, however difficult of access or of use, still do exist. An absolutely even documentation of American history is not to be hoped for. We will limit ourselves to the consideration of the problem, how to do the best possible with that which the ravages of time, of war, of paper-makers, and of housewives have spared to us.

Nor can there be any thought of dealing with all the periods and subdivisions of American history. Only an illustrative selection can be attempted. If that selection is made mainly in the field of constitutional and political history, let no one make it a matter of reproach. It may well be that the historical writers of the next generation will lay all their emphasis on social and economic history. In France and Germany the tendency is already strong in this direction, and among us one sees the pendulum beginning to swing that way. Each age has its own fashion in the writing of history. "Historical writing", said Mark Pattison, "is one of the most ephemeral forms of literary composition." But even after the tide has set in the direction of economic and social history strongly, even violently, as is the manner of American currents, even in that socialistic millennium toward which we are no doubt advancing, it is to be hoped that students, however fascinated with the narrative and the theory of social movement, however penetrated with the conviction that economic forces have controlled all human destinies, will yet remember that for the last four hundred years the actual form in which human life has mainly run its course has been that of the nation. Perhaps we are approaching a period in which the leading organization of mankind shall be the industrial, when the union of unions or the war of trusts shall be more important than the union of states or the conflict of nations. But the whole course of American history thus far has lain in the era of nations, during which the most potent and visible unity of human affairs was the political. It seems then needless to apologize if, in a discussion of the materials for American history, printed and unprinted, one speaks primarily of those which

relate to the constitutional and political history of the United States and of the colonies out of which they grew.

Beginning with the colonial period, it is first of all to be observed, how far from adequate is our supply of published materials for the history of British control and administration. First in logical order stand the King and the Privy Council, and first perhaps among the desiderata is a properly edited series into which shall be drawn off from the manuscript records in London all those acts of the Privy Council, or orders of the King in Council, and accompanying papers, which relate in any way to the British colonies in America. The *Acts of the Privy Council* have been for some time in process of publication by the British government. But now that the series is approaching the accession of James I, and the period when it would be useful to students of American history, we are told that it will not be extended beyond the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign. All the more reason why the American entries in the subsequent period should be drawn off and published, that we may have a complete and consecutive record of the doings of what was once the highest administrative and in most matters the highest judicial body of our government. Such a series is not limited, by the phrase used above, to the thirteen colonies of the mainland, and it should not be so limited. There is no more fruitful source of error, or at least of incomplete understanding, in respect to the British colonial administration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, than the habit of confining attention to those thirteen colonies which finally established their independence. The only rational mode is to consider that administration as a whole, as a system embracing sometimes colonies to the northward and always a group of insular colonies to the southward, some of them usually more regarded, as elements in the system, than most of the colonies on the mainland. Accordingly our proposed series of *Acts and Papers of the King in Council* relating to America should not fail to include those entries in the registers of the Privy Council which refer to the West-Indian and other colonies of Great Britain as well as those which have to do with the affairs of the "Old Thirteen". Nor should the series stop with 1776, nor even with 1783, when the thirteen colonies were acknowledged to be outside of British colonial jurisdiction. On the contrary, it should be continued to 1815, for in those thirty years of warfare with France many Orders in Council besides those most famous orders of November, 1807, were of moment to American history. Also, it should of course embrace the relevant acts of the Council of State under the Commonwealth.

Similarly, we should have a series of the royal proclamations relating to the colonies. Here, it may be said, we are on a somewhat different ground, because royal proclamations were printed. But they were printed in so small a number of copies that it would probably be utterly impossible for even the richest and most determined collector to possess himself of a complete set of those useful to American history. Such print stands for our present purposes on the same basis as manuscript. It may be said that from 1660, when the *London Gazette* began, we are in a better position, since proclamations were printed in its pages and do not have to be separately sought for; but apparently only one American library contains a perfect file of that periodical.

Next perhaps in logical order to the records of the Privy Council stand the journals of the Board of Trade. The records of this advisory board, indispensable toward an understanding of colonial policy, must some time be printed. For the present it is less necessary than some other tasks, because by the public-spirited action of certain friends of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania that society has been provided with an excellent transcript of the whole journal, in several scores of volumes of manuscript, which can always be consulted in Philadelphia. Ultimately however printing must be contemplated, though it is always more difficult in America to find the means for publishing documentary material that relates to all the colonies than that which relates to only one.

Parliamentary legislation for the colonies, as distinguished from administrative regulation, is, it is true, already all in print, and sets of the British statutes at large are not rare. Yet it would be very convenient if we had, separated from the mass and brought together in one book, all the acts of Parliament relating to America. The same is true of the relevant portions of the *Journals* of the House of Lords and of the House of Commons, sets of which are few in the United States, and of the reports of the debates on American subjects. It is perhaps commonly supposed that all of this last material is in the earlier volumes of Hansard's *Debates*. But without going into the complicated bibliography of the pre-Hansardian Parliamentary reports, it may be said that this is far from being the case.

Let us pass now from the general matters of British colonial policy to the establishment and government of particular colonies. It would probably be supposed by a foreigner who saw our activity in historical printing that there must surely be no lack of printed collections into which had been gathered all the fundamental documents of that government, the grants of soil and jurisdiction, the

constitutions on which the right to govern rested. But this is by no means true. The charter governments are indeed better provided, for it is an easier task to present their fundamental documents; yet Poore is not complete, and Miss Farnham's elaborate compilation covers but a part of the area. After all, too, what we need is a complete collection of all letters-patent from the crown conveying either soil or jurisdiction, either in continental America or in the islands, both those which founded important colonies and those which proved abortive; for it is only when the whole series is studied in chronological order, not five letters-patent or thirteen but twoscore or more, that the nature and development of the colonial grant are fully seen. The grant of Avalon explains the grant of Maryland; the charters for Carolina and the Isle of Providence illustrate that of Massachusetts Bay.

So much for the charter colonies. But still greater is the need of the fundamental documents in the case of the unchartered colonies, or royal provinces. Indeed the very difficulty of finding and studying their constitutions, in comparison with the ease with which charters may in most cases be found and studied, has led to some of the strangest distortions in our colonial history. In reading the pages of many writers one would suppose that the charter government was nearly the universal type of colonial constitution, whereas, when one stops to think, only five of the thirteen colonies were living under charters in 1775. For the others, the royal provinces, the fundamental documents of the constitution were the royal commissions and instructions to the governors. Comparatively few of the commissions have been printed, still fewer of the instructions, and those that have been printed are widely scattered. Yet without thorough study and comparison of them it is impossible to understand that intricate combination of the written and the unwritten, of the British and the colonial, which formed the typical constitution of the chief class of American colonies, and to which we look for the genesis of the main features of the subsequent state constitutions.

But we must not forget that our origins, even our constitutional and political origins, are not all English. Of forty-five states, many have known French or Spanish domination, and the scribe of documents played at least as large a part under the French régime, and under the Spanish colonial system a much larger part, than under the English. The archives of old France and of New France, those of Madrid and Simancas, and most of all the Archives of the Indies at Seville, contain the materials for many documentary series which are needed for the understanding of the history of Illinois and Louis-

iana, of Florida and Texas. The administrative systems of France and Spain differed widely from that of England, the colonies had much less autonomy, and there are complications due to the subordination of the colonies now lying within the borders of the United States to superior authorities like those of the viceroyalty of New Spain or the captain-generalcy of Cuba. Under these Latin régimes we cannot so readily draw the line between what is constitutional and what is merely administrative regulation. Yet it is not too much to hope that we may some time have a complete collection of edicts of the French crown touching Louisiana and the Illinois region, similar to Moreau de St. Méry's *Loix et Constitutions*, or for the Spanish rule a series of the orders and warrants of the crown for the colonies (*real órdenes* and *cédulas*), or of the proceedings, decrees, and despatches (*consultas*, *decretos*, and *despachos*) of the audiencias and of the Council of the Indies.

To propose such definite and homogeneous series from foreign archives is to propose an unusual course of procedure. The common plan has been for a state government or a historical society, on hearing that in a foreign archive there was a group of volumes containing interesting materials for the history of their locality, to send at once and have them copied, and proceed to print, regardless of the miscellaneous character of what they found or of the question whether all had been found. For such a haphazard and piecemeal policy there was some excuse in the past, but there will be none in the future. The great European archives are no longer disordered masses, from the surface of which one had better pluck up what he could while he saw it, lest it never emerge to the surface again. They can be exhaustively explored; and by the plans which the Department of Historical Research in the Carnegie Institution is following, all the important materials that they contain for the history of the United States or any part thereof will within a few years be discovered, listed, and described. It will then be possible to select and print what is needed in order to make up a relatively complete chronological series of homogeneous documents of any given type.

Doubtless the political history of the colonies lends itself less perfectly than the constitutional to the composition of such methodical series. Yet here also some order can be introduced, in the gathering of spoils from European archives. If we ask ourselves, in the English case, what political series may claim for itself the foremost place, it is likely that the choice would fall on the letters which colonial governors wrote to the authorities in London, a series of documents frequent and continuous throughout the whole period, composed under

official responsibility and by men who, though sometimes prejudiced, were in an excellent position for observation of the events of colonial history. But large numbers of these letters have already been printed, more or less systematically, especially in the case of New Hampshire, New York, and North Carolina, and of some individual governors, such as Sharpe, Spotswood, and Dinwiddie. For this reason it might be a better plan to take in hand the almost untouched series in the British archives of letters and despatches from the military and naval commanders in America, or the papers of the commissioners of customs for the colonies, full of new information respecting the plantation trade, the importance of which is now better appreciated than ever before, as the commercial causes for the American Revolution are assuming greater and greater prominence in the minds of historical writers.

There is also an international class of historical documents, obviously of the first importance, a compact collection of which is an undoubted desideratum, and that is the treaties and conventions between European powers which have a bearing on American history. The mass of them is not great. Often it is but a small part of a treaty that has reference to American affairs. Old-world diplomats might higgle with minute detail over the frontier villages of Flinders or Alsace, and throw away half a transatlantic continent in a phrase. But the specific gravity of this material, so to speak, is exceptionally great, as the history of many colonial wars will testify. It is hard, however, for the student to obtain it. Treaties were printed, it is true. But they have often not been printed anywhere with perfect accuracy, and they can now only be found imbedded in great and expensive collections, and sometimes not even there. Probably no human being in 1903 wrote five pages on the cession of Louisiana without mentioning the treaty of San Ildefonso. It is fundamental to a great boundary dispute; but probably not forty historical scholars in the United States have ever seen its full text. (It happens not to be in Martens's *Recueil*.) The lack of a scholarly edition of all these treaties and parts of treaties is however being supplied by the appropriate department of the Carnegie Institution.

It is time now to pass to the American shores, and to consider what deficiencies are to be noted in the supply of historical material for our individual colonies. The first to be mentioned is one that would seem scarcely credible, in a country where so much historical printing has been done. Any one would say that among the prime requisites for intelligent work upon the history of our development

during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we should have given a prominent place to the laws of our colonies and to the journals of their legislative assemblies. But first as to the laws. Five states, Virginia, South Carolina, Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania, have provided the historical student with good sets of their statutes at large for the colonial period or even to the early days of the nineteenth century, and so has Connecticut in a way. Maryland and New Hampshire have begun to fill the gap. But unhappy the man who tries to follow the course of legislation in the other colonies. The Public Record Commissioners of New Jersey a few years ago declared that there did not exist in that commonwealth a complete set of the laws of the colony, province, and state; and in the case of Delaware and Rhode Island it is no longer possible to make good the deficiency. Authenticated copies of the earlier laws of those two colonies do not exist either in the state capitals or in London. Even in some cases where the laws have all been printed in usable collections, the records of disallowances by the English crown are fatally incomplete.

But with the legislative journals of the lower houses of assembly the case is much worse. The student has access to those of New Hampshire and North Carolina in modern editions, fairly complete; to those of Maryland to the end of the seventeenth century, to those of New Jersey for seven years, to those of Virginia for three. For Connecticut and for forty years of the earlier period of Massachusetts history he has journals of the General Court, or records of the doings of the legislature as a whole, with which he can make shift to content himself. For Rhode Island he has what is little more than a body of extracts. Substantially, then, he has before him hardly more than a third of the record. The rest still exists only in manuscript or in print almost as rare as manuscript. For Delaware nothing exists. A few fortunate libraries contain the complete sets for New York and Pennsylvania, which printed their assembly journals in goodly volumes. Virginia has begun the issue of a stately series which will ultimately give us the whole record of the House of Burgesses, the most important of colonial assemblies. Maryland is proceeding with the matter. Georgia is perhaps about to take it up, after a fashion. But Massachusetts, New Jersey, and South Carolina should lose no time in instituting such series, without which large portions of their colonial history are bound to lack definite substance and reality; Rhode Island should make her series complete; and New York and Pennsylvania should reprint.

One more desideratum of the colonial period must be mentioned, though its magnitude is such as to cause hesitation. Yet no one can doubt that the social history of the colonial period can never be conveniently studied or adequately known so long as the supply of colonial newspapers lies in its present unsatisfactory shape. There were nearly forty newspapers in the United Colonies in 1775. Of some but a few scattered copies remain, of others there are complete files. There are numerous subjects of our social history in the ante-Revolutionary period which so run through the various colonies that they cannot be treated adequately without full examination of all of this sort of material that has survived. Yet the writer believes that there is but one man who, in the pursuit of any subject, has ever had the requisite determination and patience to carry through an examination of newspapers which required journeys to Boston on the north and to Savannah on the south, so widely scattered are the files that he must inspect. Moreover, some of the best of these will certainly vanish if steps are not soon taken for their preservation by reprint. Thirty years ago there were two good files of the *Virginia Gazette*; now there are none. There is one superb set of the *South Carolina Gazette*; as it is not in a fire-proof building, its fate is plain. No doubt it is a great expense to reproduce a file of a colonial newspaper, either by print or by photography. But does it seem as if an age that had produced *Fads and Fancies* could possibly profess inability to float an expensive book?

But it is time to turn to the history of the American Revolution. Numberless subjects of colonial history, numerous opportunities for documentary publication, have been passed over in silence. It will perhaps have been observed that nothing has been said of all the process of discovery and exploration, that happy-hunting-ground of the history-writing mind. Let it be attributed to a conviction that here, if anywhere, the supply of original material is relatively adequate. The world has been raked fine for documents relating to that age of the Argonauts, and nothing would suffer if we allowed those heroes to rest in their present state of documentation, while we devoted ourselves to catching up with other classes of transactions and of material.

It may well be maintained that much the same is true of the American Revolution. To the mind of the average American legislator, for some obscure reason, the words "American history" denote almost always the history of American wars, and especially of the Revolutionary war. Therefore it has been comparatively easy to persuade the assemblies of our states to make appropriations for the

printing of documents relating to that interesting conflict. Nevertheless what would seem to be the most fundamental documentary series, a complete edition of the general orders of Washington as commander-in-chief, remains unexecuted. For the naval warfare, which in certain years at any rate was perhaps as important and as decisive as that which took place on land, our supply of material is relatively scanty, though the naval papers of the Continental Congress and the vast unexplored masses of the British Admiralty papers would furnish abundant material for illustrating even a warfare consisting so largely of detached episodes. Probably the huge fragment of Force's *Archives* ought on some improved plan or other to be pieced out to its completion. Until little more than a year ago we should have had to confess that we had only a most incomplete edition of so primary a record as the *Journals of the Continental Congress*. But now, thanks to the superb equipment and patient labors of Mr. Worthington Ford, we are being supplied by the Library of Congress with what is substantially a perfect edition of that invaluable body of material. We shall never be able to supplement that journal with the debates, as we are accustomed to do in the case of modern congresses. Yet a series has been devised, and is being executed by another agency in this city, which will supplement in a manner almost as vivacious the formal record of proceedings. It was the habit of many if not most delegates to the Continental Congress to send home at frequent intervals to their state executives, or to other local authorities, long letters or reports upon the transactions of the Congress. These are being collected from their official repositories in a dozen different states and, when all brought together in a chronological series, will illuminate the transactions of each week by side-lights varying with the individual angle, yet forming in combination, it is hoped, a supplementary light of the greatest value. Another desideratum, in the case of several states, is a proper presentation of the journals of their constitutional and other conventions. Also, for this period and for those which have followed it, we sorely need a new edition, revised and brought down to our time, of Poore's *Charters and Constitutions*.

For the Constitutional Convention of 1787 we have long had the primary records in reasonably good shape, on the one hand the Journal and on the other hand Madison's incomparable record of the debates; and lately these have been reprinted in a form which rivals the preciseness and almost exceeds the difficulty of a facsimile text. But Madison's notes have been supplemented from time to time by those of lesser diarists—Yates, King, Pierce, Paterson, Hamilton,

and now McHenry—and documents have come to light that mark stages in the progress of the convention's work or otherwise illustrate the making of the Constitution. There is needed a complete and scientific edition of the Records of the Philadelphia Convention, which shall bring together from their various volumes these fragmentary supplements to the main narratives and shall arrange all the data, old and new, side by side under the days or parts of days or phases of the discussion to which they relate. It is a pleasure to be able to say that this work is being done, and done too in a manner certain to satisfy the needs of scholars.

The federal government of the United States, from its installation in 1789, has never been seriously remiss in the printing of the annual records of its transactions, whether legislative or executive. At times the suspicion has not been lacking that it printed too much. At all events, the task of him who would suggest gaps in the historical record of the central government is lightened when we pass that celebrated year. Nevertheless it has been demonstrated by exceedingly careful examination that the volumes devoted to Foreign Relations in the folio series of the *American State Papers* do not embrace more than one-fourth of the material, for the period which they cover, in the diplomatic archives of the Department of State. Here then is a great work which the government should take up, both for the large amount of fresh material which it will afford to the student of our history, and also for the illumination and guidance which it may give to the conduct of our national relations with other states. Such a series, however, should not merely embrace the fifty years of history covered by the *American State Papers*, but should be brought down to the outbreak of the Civil War; for it is well known to all students of our diplomatic history that for the years from 1840 to 1860 even those documents which are in print are hard to procure in unbroken series and hard to manage when procured.

There are also a few great deficiencies in the earliest legislative records which need to be supplied. The *Annals of Congress*, like the *Histoire Parlementaire* of the French National Assembly, were apparently made up from but a few newspapers. A much better account of the earlier debates, anterior to the founding of the *National Intelligencer*, could probably be supplied by a compilation from a greater number of papers. What is certain is that, as is doubtless familiar, the earlier debates of the Senate are almost entirely unreported. For the first five years the Senate of the United States sat with closed doors. For the first two years, to be sure, we have the debates recorded in the diary of one of the senators. Perhaps

we ought to be grateful for what he has given us. But probably most persons have felt quite as much exasperation as gratitude at the thought that our sole record of those interesting, momentous, and formative discussions should come to us from the sullen, mean, and envious mind of Senator William Maclay. "All things look yellow to the jaundiced eye." Discussion of materials that do not exist was from the beginning ruled out of this paper; but it may be pardonable to express a devout and earnest hope that somewhere there exists another journal of those Senatorial proceedings and that in the future it may be laid before the world. It can hardly fail to be a fairer as well as a more generous record.

In the documentary material for the history of the United States in the nineteenth century, that age of copious print, it would be vain to pretend that there are gaps of the greatest magnitude to be signalized. To enumerate a great number of small deficiencies would be tedious. It may suffice to speak by way of specimen of two or three episodes in our history on which more light might well be shed. For one, and an extremely interesting one, there is the history of the striking process by which South Carolina, from being in the last years of the eighteenth century a Federalist state, came by 1830 to be the leader of the extreme state-rights school and the protagonist of sectional interests. The process remains an obscure one. The theory that Calhoun, disappointed in his ambition for the presidency by reason of his quarrel with Jackson, persuaded his whole state into the new path, is now well seen to be untenable; for it is plain that South Carolina led Calhoun rather than Calhoun South Carolina. For the same reason, there is equally little disposition to adopt Mr. Henry Adams's view, in accordance with which Calhoun was beguiled by the fitful *ignis fatuus* that rose from the decaying brain of John Randolph as he inflicted his wayward harangues upon the Senate, while the impassive Carolinian sat in the Vice-president's chair and transmuted the hectic utterances into the cold logic of the nullification theory. Failing such theories as these, we are forced to ask for more light, for more ample publication of Carolinian resolves, speeches, editorials, and private correspondence in the years between 1790 and 1830.

For a second instance, though the national government has put forth abundantly the documents of its own civil and military history and of the military history of the Confederacy, the stores of documentary material of the civil government of the Confederacy to which it fell heir at the conclusion of the struggle still for the most part await publication. The Journals of the Confederate Congress

are indeed being laid before us. But we need to know more of the history of Secretary Benjamin's diplomacy, of the struggle for recognition, of the operations of the treasury, and of its relations to the economic life of the seceded states.¹

Lastly, it may be permissible to say a few words respecting possible further publications of the private correspondence of eminent public men. Perhaps we are hardly warranted in speaking of gaps here, at least in the sense in which we can use the phrase when speaking of a governmental office or a legislative body which maintains a continuous record of its proceedings, so that if any part of it is not present in the printed series we allege a gap in the literal sense of the term. Yet there are some statesmen whose position is so important or so peculiar that if we lack their correspondence or memoirs we feel that we lack the key to many of the chief transactions of their age. Of all the Americans of the earlier period, there are perhaps none whose correspondence we so distinctly need as the two Adamses. From the elder we have a ten-volume edition of his *Works*. But it contains after all very little of his correspondence, and those letters are so vivacious that they shine out in a formal age, and compel us to wish eagerly for more. Of the younger Adams, while we have the invaluable *Memoirs*, surely one of the most remarkable of political diaries, we have almost no letters, though he wrote well and often, during a long and varied public career. In both cases, too, we should find our profit quite as largely in the letters written to the two Presidents, and preserved in the same repository, as in the letters which they themselves wrote.

Aside from John Adams, the chief desideratum for the period of the Revolution might seem to be a new edition of the letters of Richard Henry Lee, for the man was of high abilities and undeniably interesting, while the existing edition of his *Life and Correspondence* is one of the most preposterous, disorderly, and unusable of books. In the next period, we really suffer much from the lack of any full body of material on the Southern Federalists. We have only Tredell, and he was a judicial character. For lack of a full disclosure, such as the papers of James A. Bayard might afford us, many have been obliged to persist in the misrepresentation that the Federalist party was an aggregation of New-Englanders, although it is probable that, if the whole story were before us, we should perceive that the Middle-state and Southern Federalists had furnished the party with most of that ballast of moderate wisdom which its heady North-

¹ Mr. J. D. Richardson's *Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy* (Nashville, 1905) has now partly filled this gap.

ern leaders so much needed, and with much of the momentum which enabled it to do its great work.

The list might readily be carried down to more modern times. It is needless to say with how much delight we shall all greet the publication of the papers of Andrew Jackson; but of this we are already certain. The papers of Van Buren and Polk are already assured of preservation. Their publication will surely illuminate many obscure places in our political history. In the period of the Civil War it is chiefly the papers of the principal Southern leaders, and above all of Davis and Stephens, that we most need in order to complete our materials; and on the Northern side those of the dissentient radicals like Wade and Thaddeus Stevens and Henry Winter Davis.

We are not infrequently invited to take a gloomy view of the future of the historian. We are told that the economist and the sociologist are steadily plucking away his most valuable feathers, and that our venerable muse is losing the fairest portions of her domain to far younger sciences, of which Herodotus and Thucydides never heard and to which, indeed, they might not have felt attracted. But at least it will be clear that in America the purveyor or editor of documentary materials for history has sufficient occupation for the immediate future, and much opportunity to persevere in the endeavor to secure for his science at least a broad and solid basis.

J. FRANKLIN JAMESON.



